

DAKE (J.P.)

QUARANTINE.

When, by what Authority, and for what
Purpose Maintained.

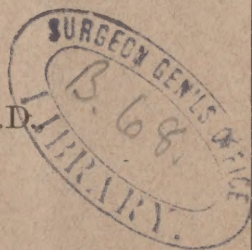
ANSWERS TO THE LEADING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF LOUISIANA, TO THE
QUARANTINE CONVENTION AT NEW OR-
LEANS, DECEMBER 8TH, 1880.

1. "In what shall Quarantine consist—in Detention, or Disinfection, or both?"
2. "When is it to be established? For what period of time? By what authority?"

✓
BY

J. P. DAKE, M.A., M.D.

COMMISSIONER FROM TENNESSEE.



[REPRINT FROM THE HAHNEMANNIAN MONTHLY.]

PHILADELPHIA:
SHERMAN & CO., PRINTERS.
1881.

QUARANTINE.

WHEN, BY WHAT AUTHORITY, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE
MAINTAINED.

ANSWERS TO THE LEADING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF LOUISIANA, TO THE
QUARANTINE CONVENTION AT NEW OR-
LEANS, DECEMBER 8TH, 1880.

1. "*In what shall quarantine consist—in detention, or disinfection, or both?*"
2. "*When is it to be established? For what period of time? By what authority?*"

BY J. P. DAKE, M.A., M.D., DELEGATE, COMMISSIONED BY THE GOVERNOR OF TENNESSEE.

MR. PRESIDENT: From the language and tenor of the questions which follow that now before the convention, I take it that, the quarantine we are asked to consider is that of an American port, against shipping from other ports, foreign or domestic.

With such an understanding of what is intended, I desire, as a representative of Tennessee, to respond briefly to the several divisions of question number one.

1. It is asked, "In what shall the quarantine consist—in detention, or in disinfection, or in both?"

I take it, sir, that there can be no differences of opinion here, among persons well informed, as to the necessities of the case.

Do vessels ever bring to our ports the seeds of disease, such as may occasion a destructive epidemic?

Is there a delegate upon this floor who ventures to answer the inquiry in the negative? I think not.

If vessels do, at times, bring to our shores the causes of pestilence and death, there can be but one opinion as to the necessity of their detention. And if they are detained it must not be out of any idle curiosity, nor without some practical purpose. We are, therefore, ready to answer the question of the State Board of Health for Louisiana by saying: *The quarantine should consist both in detention and disinfection.*

The detaining of a vessel should be, first of all, to inquire

into the character of her papers, as to her condition on leaving port.

Efforts are now in progress, national and international, to secure proper bills of health for all vessels going upon the sea.

In the second place, the detention should be for proper inquiry as to the health of passengers and crew since the time of leaving port.

However healthy the persons aboard may have been at the time of sailing, disease of a serious and infectious character may have developed among them during the voyage.

In the third place, the detention should be, for a close examination of the vessel, with its baggage and cargo, where there is ground for suspicion that it may be the repository and vehicle of infection.

And, in the fourth place, the detention should be sufficient to allow necessary measures of disinfection where inquiry and examination have shown the presence of transmissible seeds of disease.

The detention contemplated is not such as to injure, but rather to protect the commerce of the ocean and the trade of cities.

A few hours may suffice for the examination of bills of health and of the condition of passengers and crew. If all is fair the vessel in question may pass quickly into port. If all is not fair the detention must be longer; and, in each case, must be lengthened in proportion to the risk incurred.

2. In response to the question: "When is quarantine to be established, and for what period of time?" I would say, *at once and all the time.*

At this point it is proper to say that we do not use the term quarantine in the sense given it in olden times, and even yet by many, who speak of it as referring to a relic of barbarism and an incubus upon travel and trade.

The quarantine contemplated is but a station and mode of inquiry and inspection, offering an asylum to the sick, and an adequate protection to the well.

It is to facilitate the intercourse of nations and the progress of business by giving a free course where there is safety, and a prohibition where there is danger.

History furnishes abundant examples of the sad effects of fear, the utter ruin of commerce and almost complete annihilation of human kindness, where intelligent inquiry and investigation have done nothing to discriminate between things and persons really dangerous and those really harmless.

It is for us to choose a system of enlightened and honest inquiry and protection, or the measures of a blind and cruel fanaticism, which closes every port and avenue and door to friend and foe alike.

Such a quarantine, then, as we contemplate, should be constantly maintained. There is not a year, nor a month in a year, nor a single week in a month, when it can be said that no vessel enters the Mississippi from the Gulf of Mexico that may not have the infection of yellow fever aboard.

If there is no yellow fever or cholera prevailing in any country that has a direct trade with New Orleans, then the detention and inspection would be short, so short as to prove no interference whatever with shipping interests.

3. I come now to the last inquiry in the general question number one, namely, "By what authority is the quarantine to be established and maintained?"

I am aware that, not only here but even in the National Congress, different opinions exist as to the proper answer to this question.

I think, however, if we calmly consider the interests involved, the work to be done and the expense to be borne, there will be little hesitation in saying that the undertaking should be that of the United States Government.

The interests involved pertain not to one locality nor to one State.

Quarantine or no quarantine, detention and disinfection or no detention and disinfection, at the mouth of the Mississippi, concerns not merely the city of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana, but also, if not so immediately, every city and State lying upon the "Father of Waters" and his larger tributaries.

This proposition requires no argument or illustration. Most unwelcome facts, fresh in the memory of the whole people, have settled its truthfulness beyond all question. And the work to be done in the protection of such widespread interests is by no means light.

Buildings are to be erected and furnished and managed, at necessary points, for the reception of the sick and accommodation of the well, taken from infected vessels. In times of comparative safety these stations may call for but little work; while in seasons like those of 1878 and 1879, and of many a year before, the labor and care would be great. And where all these preparations are to be made, and all these labors bestowed, there must be heavy expense.

The quarantine required for the protection of this city and the country beyond, cannot be less extensive and less efficient than that found necessary for the protection of the city of New York. That has cost, and annually costs, a large amount of money.

In view, then, of the extended interests involved and the labor and expense, I ask: Is it right, is it fair, to have the city of New Orleans, or the State of Louisiana, establish and maintain the necessary quarantine at the mouth of the Mississippi?

As a representative of Tennessee I would say that, much as our State has suffered from the ravages of disease brought to us through the open gateways of the Gulf, we would spurn the thought of purchasing immunity at the expense of our sister State.

In common with all the States having commercial intercourse with Louisiana, by river and rail, we wish to be protected, and we wish to bear our proportion of the *expense* of protection. And here the question arises: How, and by what sort of compact can the several States interested participate in paying the cost of the benefits secured?

Do you tell me by a union, a confederation, a special compact of States?

Sir, what have we, as a *nation*, but such a union and compact?

Why abandon *that* to form another? I confess that it seems to me like a child's play to discard a provision already wisely made and long employed successfully, in order to make another not half so good. If the national treasury and the hands of the nation are employed to clear away the obstacles to navigation and to deepen the channels of our rivers, why may they not be as legitimately employed in the prevention of evils which press not upon the water-ways and commerce of one State alone, nor one group of States, but upon the entire country?

But, says my friend, the politician, it is an encroachment upon the reserved rights of the States, an unconstitutional proceeding, for the General Government to establish and maintain quarantine stations, especially upon our rivers and railroads. Though I am not a politician, and though I claim but a limited knowledge of the intricacies of constitutional questions, I am fully convinced, by common observation and common sense, that the union of the States was not effected simply to secure a *name* for our country, nor yet to perpetuate

an abstraction, a bodiless scarecrow for the intimidation of foreign powers, in the shape of a General Government.

The very power vested in Congress by the Constitution to regulate and govern the commerce of the country, both foreign and between the States, confers upon that body the right, nay, the duty, to protect that commerce against destruction by the ravages of disease.

If the General Government may rightfully clear out snags from the channel and sand-bars from the mouth of the Mississippi, for the benefit of Louisiana and all the other States above, why should it not as rightfully and as necessarily clear away and keep off, as far as possible, the piracy of disease?

Inasmuch as we are all alike interested, let me ask those who object to a national system of quarantine, why this fear of the power of the national government? What interest can that government have that is not also the interest of each State?

Mr. President, I can readily imagine a style of national quarantine which I, also, would fear and strenuously oppose. Were a health minister placed in the presidential cabinet at Washington, with power to control appointments of all sanitary inspectors and officers, to administer, through a line of subordinates, the health service of our shipping on the sea, at quarantine stations, and in hospitals, and to detain and deal with vessels and railway trains without reference to the views and wishes of resident physicians and sanitary boards and business men, I would be one of the first to seek the overthrow of such an oppressive and inadequate system.

What we want, then, is a general system of quarantine, taking in the entire country, sustained by the Federal Government, and administered by the National Board of Health through local boards of health, State and municipal.

We would not have a medical autocrat sitting at Washington, while we were struggling with an epidemic of yellow fever on the banks of the Mississippi, dictating our measures from day to day, but we would like the highest learning in Washington, and in the entire National Board of Health, exercised in aiding our brave workers upon the field by all the means and power placed at their command by the Constitution and acts of Congress.

Let the power be central and the application local, with measures changing to suit the exigencies of time and place as observed by those upon the field.

In our case, all quarantine establishments for the Mississippi

Valley should be by authority and at the expense of the National Government, administered always by a local board, having one member appointed by the Board of Health or the governor of each State immediately concerned, the management being in accordance with the general rules laid down by the National Board of Health.

With such an arrangement there need be no fear of unjust discriminations nor of grave mistakes and neglect, through a lack of knowledge or of interest, on the part of those exercising sanitary inspection and control.

There might be three of such boards, one for the Atlantic and one for the Pacific States, and the third for the Mississippi Valley, to take immediate charge of all quarantine stations and measures in their respective fields.

